

VZCZCXRO9465
RR RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHSQ #0336/01 1171442
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 271442Z APR 07
FM AMEMBASSY SKOPJE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6014
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
RUEHSQ/USDAO SKOPJE MK
RUESEN/SKOPJE BETA
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/CDR TF FALCON

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 SKOPJE 000336

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/SCE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/25/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [MK](#)

SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: DAS DICARLO MEETINGS WITH GOM AND
OPPOSITION LEADERS ON NATO MEMBERSHIP AND KOSOVO

REF: SKOPJE 296

Classified By: Poloff Katrina Mosser for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

11. (C) During April 23 meetings with GOM and opposition leaders in Skopje, DAS DiCarlo emphasized the need for the GOM to move forward on NATO-related reforms as time is running out for Macedonia to make its case for NATO membership in 2008. Of utmost importance is resolving the ongoing political stalemate between PM Gruevski and ethnic Albanian opposition leader Ahmeti, which has halted much of the GOM's work in recent months. In addition, DiCarlo urged the GOM to work towards reducing tensions with Greece over the name dispute, so that this bi-lateral dispute does not negatively impact Macedonia's NATO membership bid. DiCarlo thanked her interlocutors for their support for the Ahtisaari plan and received assurances this support will continue. In his meeting with DiCarlo, Ahmeti showed a new willingness to reach a compromise and return to parliament. END SUMMARY

DICARLO MEETS WITH GOM & OPPOSITION LEADERS

12. (U) On April 23, EUR DAS DiCarlo met with President Crvenkovski; PM Gruevski, along with DPM Aliu and FM Milososki; and opposition leaders Ahmeti and Sekerinska; and also attended a dinner hosted by Milososki and Minister of Finance Slaveski. Her meetings focused on NATO membership, Kosovo, and the name dispute with Greece. DiCarlo emphasized that 2007 is a challenging year for Macedonia and the region, but it is an important year. The last push by Macedonia, Croatia, and Albania to implement key NATO-related reforms in advance of possible membership invitations at the 2008 NATO Summit and the resolution of Kosovo status are two critical events that will shape the future of the entire region.

NATO MEMBERSHIP - POLITICAL DIALOGUE

13. (C) DiCarlo said the USG continues to support Macedonia's NATO membership bid in 2008, but emphasized to all her interlocutors that there is much work to do and time is short. Macedonia must make significant progress by the fall of 2007 in order to gain the support of all NATO member states prior to the 2008 NATO Summit. In the wake of recent

high-level Macedonian leadership discussions (reftel), DiCarlo emphasized the need to resolve the political stalemate between the GOM and Ali Ahmeti's ethnic Albanian opposition party DUI that has slowed much of the parliament's work in recent months. Crvenkovski and Sekerinska expressed their frustration with the lack of political dialogue, saying the stalemate has lasted for too long and is damaging Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

14. (C) Gruevski said progress has been made as a result of recent meetings. However, he made a point of saying that DUI's political demands are not mandated by the Ohrid Framework Agreement (FWA) and that DUI must understand the need to work together to improve Macedonia's NATO membership prospects. Ahmeti said the leadership discussions are not taking place simply for the sake of meeting and that DUI does want to return parliament to help move Macedonia forward. Backing away from his strong stance in a meeting with Gruevski a week earlier, Ahmeti said that DUI would return to parliament if the leaders could reach a resolution on the composition of the Committee on Inter-ethnic Relations; agree on a list of laws that require the Badinter majority; and reach a "political agreement" on a language law and benefits for NLA (the ethnic Albanian insurgent group during the 2001 conflict) veterans, which then would be finalized in parliament within two to three months of DUI's return. Ahmeti sought U.S. support for, and DiCarlo welcomed, his compromise proposal. DiCarlo said embassy officials would be willing to approach Gruevski with this new proposal in hopes of arranging another leadership meeting to resolve these differences and end DUI's boycott of parliament. (NOTE: PolChief shared Ahmeti's proposal with PM Gruevski's Chief of Staff later that day. He was positive in general, although

SKOPJE 00000336 002 OF 003

noting that the NLA provision would be more difficult. Gruevski and Ahmeti are scheduled to meet Friday, April 27, to discuss a package to resolve the issues Ahmeti raised with DiCarlo. END NOTE)

NATO MEMBERSHIP - TIME IS SHORT

15. (C) DiCarlo told Gruevski the political maturity of Macedonia and the ability of the GOM to garner broad political consensus to pass and implement NATO-related reforms will be of vital importance to NATO member states when considering whether to extend a NATO membership invitation to Macedonia. Prior to September 2007, the GOM will need to pass a new law on religion that confirms freedom of religion and is in-line with international standards; continue implementation of the decentralization process; achieve further implementation of the FWA, including progress on equitable minority representation throughout state institutions; demonstrate continued progress on fighting trafficking in persons (TIP); and strengthen the rule of law, including the prosecution of two or three high-profile corruption cases.

16. (SBU) Gruevski listed a number of the GOM's recent accomplishments in the areas of rule of law, FWA implementation, decentralization, combating TIP, religious freedom, defense reforms, and preparations for the EAPC Security Forum to be held in June. He highlighted recent convictions in two large corruption cases and progress in parliament on passing a new law on the public prosecutor as examples of recent efforts to strengthen rule of law. The decentralization process is moving forward, with phase two set to begin on July 1. Gruevski hopes 30 municipalities will be ready to begin the next phase; at dinner MoF Slaveski said 10-20 municipalities will be ready for phase two, including municipalities with mayors from coalition and opposition parties. Gruevski said the Venice Commission recently provided comments on the draft law on religion. He believes the law will be acceptable to domestic religious communities and the international community, with minor

changes.

KOSOVO - UNANIMOUS SUPPORT FOR THE AHTISAARI PLAN

17. (C) DiCarlo thanked the GOM for their continued support of the Ahtisaari plan and asked that this strong support continue throughout the UN Security Council's deliberations. All her interlocutors pledged their continued support for the Ahtisaari plan and said that the passage of a UNSCR would be the ideal way forward for stability and security in the region. There is a clear understanding within the GOM that eventual Kosovo independence is inevitable and that any delay in reaching a final decision on Kosovo would only serve to destabilize the region. PM Gruevski said the demarcation of the border with Kosovo is a key issue for Macedonia, and he looked forward to a timely implementation of demarcation in accordance with the Ahtisaari plan.

18. (C) DiCarlo said the USG would like to see a Kosovo UNSCR by the end of May, but the path to reaching an agreement in the UNSC is getting tougher as the Russian government is hardening its stance on the Ahtisaari plan. President Crvenkovski feared that Russia's position is raising unrealistic public expectations in Serbia and will make the realization of Kosovo independence more difficult for Belgrade. Gruevski and Sekerinska strongly opposed any partition of Kosovo, as they believe that would destabilize the region and serve to embolden radicals in the region who seek to redraw existing borders. Ahmeti said he is pleased the Kosovar Albanians have remained largely calm during recent months. He noted that the lack of violence in Kosovo has served to reduce the strength of those who oppose the Ahtisaari plan and Kosovo independence.

19. (C) Crvenkovski and Sekerinska stressed the need for Macedonia to maintain good relations with both Pristina and Belgrade. The President said the timing of Macedonia's recognition of an independent Kosovo will be carefully weighed in relation to maintaining ties with Belgrade; a

SKOPJE 00000336 003 OF 003

UNSCR would serve to ease this decision for the GOM.

NAME DISPUTE - "CEASE-FIRE" POSSIBLE?

10. (C) In an effort to decrease tensions with Greece over the name issue and avoid possible efforts to delay Macedonia's NATO membership by Greece, DiCarlo asked Gruevski and Crvenkovski to refrain from taking any actions that Greece could see as provocative. In addition, she urged the GOM to refrain from responding to any provocations from Greece. DiCarlo encouraged the GOM to consider a "charm offensive" with the Greek government, seeking joint coordination and cooperation where possible and thereby taking away Athens' argument that Macedonia is an uncooperative neighbor.

11. (C) Crvenkovski noted the recent increase in tensions between Skopje and Athens and attributed it not only to Macedonia's possible NATO membership bid, but also to internal Greek politics and the upcoming elections. This point was later echoed by FM Milososki, who noted his recent efforts to improve relations with Athens by inviting FM Bakoyannis to visit Skopje. Nikola Dimitrov, Macedonia's chief negotiator on the name dispute, said he had sought to hold a meeting on the name dispute in Ohrid in April and the Greeks had been receptive to the idea. However, these plans were leaked and the meeting was canceled. Negotiators from both sides now will meet with Ambassador Nimetz in New York in May. Crvenkovski does not believe a new proposal to resolve the dispute would be beneficial at this time due to upcoming Greek elections.

COMMENT

¶12. (C) DiCarlo's visit to Skopje was well timed with our ongoing efforts to encourage the GOM to engage all political parties in constructive dialogue and to focus the GOM's work on NATO-related reforms. Her visit appears to have re-energized the GOM's efforts on required NATO-related reforms, with a clear understanding that time is short. In addition, Ahmeti has finally offered a compromise solution to resolving key issues that hopefully will bring an end to DUI's boycott of parliament. END COMMENT

¶13. (U) This cable was cleared by DAS DiCarlo.
MILOVANOVIC